

The Magic Paintbrush



This is a much-loved wondertale from China about helping others and protecting yourself. There are many variations of the story, among them a wonderful printed version by Julia Donaldson with illustrations by Joel Stuart. I suggest reading that book later, once the children are familiar with this version.

Once upon a time, there was a young man called Ma Liang. He was poor and kind and helped a rich man to tend cattle. He liked drawing and drew pictures everywhere. One night, he dreamed that an old man gave him a magic paintbrush and asked him to use it to help poor people. When he woke up, he found the magic paintbrush in his desk.

From that day on, he used the paintbrush whenever people needed help. When he saw that people had no water to use in the fields, he drew a river and the river came to life. People could bring water from the river to the field and save a lot of time and energy.

When he saw it was difficult for people to till lands, he drew a cow and the cow came to life. People could use the cow to till lands very easily.

When he saw people were hungry, he painted them food to eat.

When they needed a home, he painted a house.

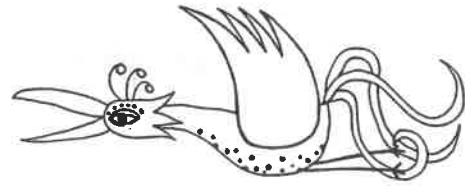
Whenever he saw the people's troubles, he would use his magic paintbrush to help.

Soon, many people knew about the magic paintbrush.

One day the rich man heard that the magic paintbrush could bring anything to life. He decided to steal the paintbrush and use it to get rich.

He sent the police to Ma Liang's home and took him to the prison. Then the rich man got the magic paintbrush and felt very happy.

He invited a lot of his friends to come to his home and showed them the magic paintbrush. He drew a lot of pictures, but nothing happened. He was angry and summoned Ma Liang.



When Ma Liang came, he said to him, 'If you draw some pictures for me and turn them to life, I will set you free.'

The young man knew that he was a bad man in the village. Of course he did not want to help him. He had an idea. He said to the bad man, 'I can help you, but you should obey your words.'

The bad man felt very happy and said, 'I want a golden mountain. I will go there to gather gold.' The young man drew a sea first.

The bad man was angry and said, 'Why did you draw a sea? I do not want this. I want a golden mountain. Draw it quickly!'

Then the young man drew a golden mountain, which was far away from the sea. The bad man saw that and felt very happy. He said, 'Draw a big ship quickly! I want to go there to gather gold!'

The young man smiled quietly and drew a big ship.

The bad man jumped into the ship first and a lot of his family and friends jumped in too.

When the ship sailed to the middle of the sea, the young man drew a large wave and it destroyed the ship. So the bad man and his friends died.

After that, the young man lived with his family happily and kept on helping the poor people. In this way the magic paintbrush was known by everyone.